

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GEORGE 01576 180429Z
ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6806

C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 1576

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, PORS, GY, US
SUBJECT: EXPORT LICENSE FOR TEAR GAS TO GUYANA

REF: (A) STATE 119942, (B) GEORGETOWN 1490

1. WE FULLY SHARE THE DEPARTMENT'S CONCERN THAT GUYANESE GOVERNMENT'S REQUEST TO PURCHASE TEAR GAS MAY REFLECT OFFICIAL ESTIMATE THAT SERIOUS ECONOMIC PROBLEMS COUPLED WITH GOVERNMENT'S HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL POLITICAL PROPOSALS TO ESTABLISH A NEW CONSTITUTION MAY LEAD TO SERIOUS CIVIL UNREST IN COMING MONTHS.

2. THE RECENT USE OF TEAR GAS AT LINDEN (GEORGETOWN 1490) AGAINST STRIKERS ON MAY 4 IS CURRENTLY BEING INVESTIGATED BY THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS, AND THE POLICE COMMISSIONER AS WELL AS BY UNOFFICIAL ORGANIZATIONS, SUCH AS THE TRADES UNION COUNCIL. THAT INCIDENT ALONG WITH TA LESS-PUBLICIZED ONE AT GOLDEN GROVE INVOLVING A STAMPEDE FOR SCARCE COMMODITIES OUTSIDE A GOVERNMENT FOOD OUTLET REPRESENT TWO RECENT USES OF TEAR GAS BY GUYANESE POLICE AUTHORITIES. THE EMBASSY IS NOT IN A POSITION TO RENDER A CRITICAL JUDGMENT AS TO WHETHER OR NOT THE USE OF TEAR GAS WAS JUSTIFIED IN EITHER INSTANCE.

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3. AT THE SAME TIME, THE GUYANESE POLICE, MODELED AS THEY ARE IN THE BRITISH MOLD, HAVE MAINTAINED OVER THE YEARS AN ESSENTIALLY APOLITICAL RECORD WHICH REMAINS LARGELY INTACT TODAY. AND AS WITH OTHER PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS CHARGED WITH THE MAINTENANCE OF LAW AND ORDER, THEY PROBABLY REQUIRE A STOCK OF TEAR GAS AS NORMAL EQUIPMENT IN THEIR INVENTORY. IF

THE U.S. HAS, IN THE PAST, BEEN A NORMAL SUPPLIER OF TEAR GAS FOR THE GUYANESE POLICE FORCE, THE EMBASSY SEES NO REASON WHY THAT SUPPLY CHANNEL SHOULD BE INTERRUPTED IN THE PRESENT INSTANCE. IF, HOWEVER, THERE HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN ANOTHER SOURCE WHICH HAS NOW BEEN DENIED TO THE GOG OR IF THE AMOUNT IN QUESTION IS CONSIDERED EXCESSIVE AND BEYOND THE NORMAL NEEDS OF A POLICE FORCE OF THIS SIZE, THEN THE EMBASSY WOULD RECOMMEND DISAPPROVAL OF THIS REQUEST.

4. IF THE SALE IS DENIED, THIS FACT WILL OBVIOUSLY COME TO THE ATTENTION OF SENIOR GOG OFFICIALS, INCLUDING PRIMIN BURNHAM, WHO WILL BE LIKELY TO INTERPRET THE REFUSAL AS PART OF A DESTABILIZATION EFFORT DIRECTED AT HIS REGIME. THE "DESTABILIZATION" THEME IS BEING GIVEN WIDER CURRENCY THESE DAYS AND WAS SOUNDED AGAIN BY THE PRIMIN HIMSELF IN HIS MAY 13 PRESS CONFERENCE.
BURKE

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